Special Panel Named

House Approves New JFK Probe

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King Murder Also Listed For Inquiry

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House voted yesterday to launch new investigations into the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and civil rights leader Martin Luther King.

It adopted, 280 to 65, a resolution to set up a special investigating committee. Sponsors said information never sifted thoroughly points to a conspiracy in the Kennedy case and to the possible involvement of more than one person in the King shooting.

Rep. Thomas N. Downing, D-Va., told the House, "In the case of President Kennedy I am convinced there was a conspiracy involved. I do not know the identity of the conspirators or their motives. That should be investigated in depth."

EARLIER, SPEAKER Carl Albert said he is designating Downing as chairman of the 12-member select committee and Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez, D-Tex., as next-ranking Democrat. Both have long been active in efforts to reopen the assassination cases.

Downing is retiring at the end of this year and Gonzalez would presumably succeed him as chairman if, as is expected, the inquiry is renewed in the new Congress. Downing said a staff will be gathered and preliminary inquiries made the rest of this year.

Del. Walter Fauntroy of the District of Columbia said "new information justifies this investigation" of the

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JFK, King Probes Set

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King death. Fauntroy served as Washington director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference when King headed the organization.

"The shameful conduct of the FBI with respect to Martin Luther King is enough to convince us of the need for additional investigation," he said. "The King assassination has never been investigated thoroughly. There was never a trial."

THERE WAS LITTLE opposition expressed in debate on the resolution, but Rep. B.F. Sisk, D-Calif., argued it could accomplish little.

"For God's sake, if you have any respect for the dollars of taxpayers, let's vote this resolution down," Sisk said.

"To me, it is almost unbelievable that we should be here, close to October, even discussing this issue. People are running around, just plain witch hunting."

A spokesman for Downing estimated the inquiry would cost from $200,000 to $250,000 for the rest of the year. The House must approve money for the investigation separately.

Downing said it would be kept rigorously nonpartisan, that there would be "no witch hunts" and no efforts to blame those who conducted earlier investigations without the benefit of information now available.

Kennedy's assassination was investigated by a special commission headed by the late Chief Justice Earl Warren. One of the members was President Ford, then minority leader of the House. The commission reported finding no evidence establishing that anyone other than Lee Harvey Oswald was involved.

BUT DOWNING said, "much vital information was withheld from the Warren Commission."

He said the CIA withheld information about its involvement in plots against Cuban President Fidel Castro and that the murders of two persons he described as Mafia figures recruited by the CIA for its anti-Castro plots remain unexplained.

"A threatening note by Lee Harvey Oswald to the FBI was torn up and flushed down a toilet," Downing said. He said medical notes on the autopsy performed on Kennedy were burned and information about ties between Jack Ruby and the Mafia and Cuban factions was unexplored. Ruby killed Oswald two days after the Kennedy assassination.

Both Downing and Fauntroy said polls show a majority of Americans are not satisfied with the findings of the earlier investigations.

Fauntroy has declined to disclose the new information he says is available on the King assassination, but it is understood to include allegations involving the removal of a black policeman and two firemen from their posts in Memphis shortly before King's death there.

FIRST MADE PUBLIC in 1968, the information was sent last month to King's widow, Coretta, and to members of the Congressional Black Caucus by screenwriter Abby Mann and Mark Lane, a long-time critic of the assassinations investigations.

One allegation is that Edward E. Redditt, a black police sergeant who was in charge of security for King was sent home by Memphis Fire and Police Director Frank C. Holloman a short time before King was shot April 4, 1968 on the ground that a threat had been made against his life. Another allegation is that two black firemen assigned to a fire station opposite the motel where King was shot were transferred.

Holloman had been an FBI agent for 25 years before taking the Memphis post, and had worked in the office of Director J. Edgar Hoover.

Action on long-dormant resolutions to reinvestigate the Kennedy and King killings came after Downing, Gonzalez and others teamed up with Black Caucus members to persuade the House leadership to support a proposal for an investigating committee.

The resolution adopted specifies inquiries into the Kennedy and King cases and authorizes the committee to look into other similar cases at its discretion. There had been some discussion in advance that the killing of Sen. Robert Kennedy might also be investigated, but debate yesterday indicated the committee would probably confine itself to the two cases and any others that might be shown to have connections with these.